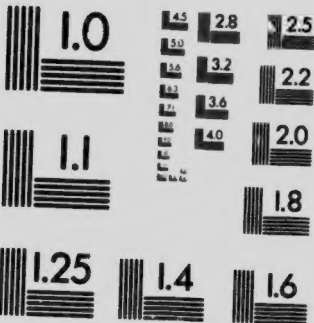


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# The Adventures of a German Hunter in America



*Translated from the German*

*By HON. WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL, L.H.D., etc.*



*Rod and Gun Press,  
May 1913.*

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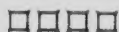
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141

# The Adventures of a German Hunter in America

*Translated from the German by Hon. William Renwick Riddell, L. H. D., etc.*

Friedrich Gerstaecker, born in 1816 at Hamburg, sailed in 1837 for America on the "Konstitution." After remaining a short time in New York, he went up the Hudson to Albany and then by the Erie Canal westward. He spent a few days in Canada and then went west and south.



## A Bear Hunt in the Ozark Mountains in '38

WE were very glad to reach shelter, and had hardly got our feet out of the stirrups before we heard good news. Some Cherokees hunting there in the mountains had discovered a hole in which there certainly was a bear hiding, but they had not ventured to go far into it as it was so long and narrow. This was "water for our mill." The skin and meat of the deer we had shot were placed in safety, our guns fired off and cleaned, the horses foddered and we now prepared ourselves for a regular hunt. We spent the evening telling bear stories, Old Conwell entertaining us with an interesting description of their winter sleep.

"In this somewhat southerly latitude the bear as a rule goes into his hole about Christmas or the beginning of January when the cold weather commences. If the weather is mild he comes out now and then, and remains out altogether; he prepares a lair for himself in a thick bush biting off and bringing together twigs for that purpose. He seeks the roughest and wildest places seldom trod by human foot.

If he goes into his hole, he lies there without taking any nourishment; but when he is not sleeping, he sucks his paws and at the same time makes a whining sound. This sucking of his paws is only to pass the time away and not at all for nourishment, for blaméd little fat can he get out of them. Children suck their thumbs, too, you know. When he falls at length into his winter's sleep, he lies with his belly and forehead on the ground so that his nose is pressed against his breast and both his forepaws lie together over his head."

My old friend assured me that he had crept into holes and poked the bears with the barrel of his rifle to make them move and raise their heads up so that he was able without difficulty to shoot them through the brain.

The bear, as the story goes, is very cowardly when in the hole, except when accompanied by young. In this case, the beast will often fight; but even then, only when it has no other choice. On very warm days it leaves its hole to drink; it goes however, to the nearest water, and it is remarkable how accurately it keeps always to the same path. When a bear is living in a hole and goes often to a stream, the hunter easily finds his track as it becomes deep and plain by the bear always following the same trail. This trail the hunters call "stepping-path."

When it got late, we lay down to get a good rest for the next day's work. During the night, it became bitterly cold—and we got the finest day for hunting that anyone could wish for. With us went a married son of my old friend who was living in the vicinity; also a young man by the name of Smith; and as we rode past the schoolhouse, the school master sent away the boys and girls and insisted upon accompanying the hunting party. We had brought along split pine to make torches with, and young Smith acted as guide, as he was one of those who had followed the bear, but had not ventured any further than the Indians.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at the spot, and we prepared a good dinner to strengthen ourselves somewhat for the expected exertions. While the meat was broiling by the fire, I took a look around the outside of the hole. It was a steep wall of limestone rock about thirty feet high and perhaps three hundred feet long, and it had four distinct openings or entrances, making one of the most curious works of nature, I, at least, have ever seen.

After we had refreshed ourselves sufficiently, we made ready to enter the hole. We took only one rifle with us as we had to creep along in Indian file; and

in that rough hole one might easily receive a wound through the discharge of a rifle. Everyone carried in his belt his great hunting knife, and I buckled on my powder-horn close to the body. With rifle in the right hand, and a torch of split pine, at least twenty inches long, in the left, I entered the dark passage which led into the mountain. This was perhaps four feet high and two wide. Behind me came young Conwell and then old Conwell, the latter carrying a bundle of fine-split pine to renew our torches in case they burned down. The passage was in the solid rock and we went without difficulty seventy or eighty paces; then we made a sharp turn to the right and we had to get upon our knees in order to go forward at all. The floor which thus far was of rock now became softer; it consisted of clay, and exhibited very plainly bear tracks of which one was particularly fresh, and from its appearance could have been made only a few hours before. The further we forced our way in, the narrower the passage became; and soon we had to crawl forward upon our bellies. This far the Indians had come, for we found several pieces of pine and we also noticed the impressions of their knees and elbows in the soft earth—beyond this point, however, there was no trace of them.

The passage way now became so confined that I had to force myself through the narrowest clefts, dragging forward with the left elbow, shoving behind with the feet and lying flat on the ground, holding at the same time the torch in the left, the rifle in the right hand. Curiously enough, the hole at this point was almost round and the walls on each side were rubbed so smooth and black that they looked actually greasy. This could have happened only through the creeping in and out of wild animals which had for centuries made use of the cavern for sleeping and winter quarters.

Stalactites hung down from the roof everywhere; and these also hindered progress forward, as the free space in a few places was no more than two feet high; and there were several places where I could make my way through only with the utmost exertion.

It was obvious that we were the first white men who had forced their way into this chamber of horrors, for the soft floor showed plainly every track which had been impressed into it for many years: we found, too, in many places even petrified bear-tracks which had

been imprinted perhaps many centuries before in the clay which was then soft. The thought certainly struck me at one time to turn back lest we should not be able to return and must perish there in that grave; but I had my rifle and so I crept on with all my thinking apparatus devoted to the one object of finding the sleeping bear.

Very noticeable was the great number of bats which everywhere hung by their legs from the roof and who, disturbed by the fire of the torch close under them, set up a shrill cry almost like the noise of a rattlesnake. Crickets were found too in great abundance as well as a few bluebottle flies.

My torch was about burned out as I had brought only a few slivers so as to save pine: so I now stopped so that the man following me might pass me a few slivers. While I was resting quiet for an instant, it seemed to me that I heard not far away a light whimpering—"hush"—everything was still as death and now I distinguished clearly at a short distance the sound which young bears make in sucking. At the same time there was to be heard a low growling, and there was no longer any doubt that we were drawing near to the den of a she bear with cubs.

Just then I found myself in a somewhat roomier place where I could rise half erect, having chosen to rest here a moment—so I turned round to the Conwells and asked them if they had heard the noise. They whispered "yes;" and we held a short council of war as to what course we should now pursue.

In the first place the passage began to be so narrow and uncomfortable that we could force our way in only with the most strenuous exertions, and then we had counted on a sleeping bear, not a waking she-bear with cubs. It was, in reality, almost too early in the season to expect a bear with cubs; but afterwards my old friend assured me that in Arkansas he had come across young cubs as early as about New Year's day. However, it made no difference.

Whoever has ever seen a she-bear with ears laid back and jaws wide open defending her young may have some slight conception of how we felt. We had all three of us been on a bear hunt, and knew quite well what danger we ran in that contracted space, which forbade all movement. But there we were—and so was the bear; and no one was coward enough to hint at going back. I ex-

amined my rifle to see if everything was in perfect condition, and as I went slowly forward again, the old man gave me warning to make a sure shot.

Nearer and nearer we came to the growling bear, who must have heard us long before and was now for certain listening with strained ears. At last I came so close that the whining of the cubs and the threatening growl of the old bear seemed close in front of me; and holding the torch behind my head, I saw distinctly her glowing eyes.

Then I stopped, cleaned the sight of my rifle in which some clay had got placed, stirred up the torch and without venturing to make any further noise I crept forward toward the black mass which I could now distinguish clearly.

The decisive moment seemed come; and as I saw the head of the animal shining out from the surrounding darkness, I began my preparations for a shot from a favorable position.

The bear had raised herself up from her lair; she was sitting with the usual oscillatory motion upon her hind-legs, and I was just trying to draw a bead upon one of her eyes when she suddenly rose and at once disappeared into the darkness lying behind her, a darkness which could almost be felt.

Arrived at the lair, we found three cubs, splendid little things, which cried out lustily when they saw the light, to which they were unaccustomed, and indeed had never seen before. It was certainly not without ground that we feared that the cry of her young would rouse the old bear to a frenzy; we desired, however, to take them alive and keep them; and so we asked the elder Conwell to stay by them and soothe them, and at the same time to keep up a light while the other two of us pressed forward and tried to kill the old bear. Conwell was content to do this; he bent down beside them and put his finger into their mouth. They began eagerly to suck on the finger and soon he had them quieted.

Not ten feet from the lair, the passage divided into two openings of equal size to the right and left. Here, however, the soft floor showed a track in the right hand opening, made only a few seconds before—and accordingly we followed this track.

The cry of the cubs which in a short time was renewed with greater force began to be ominous for us, for we should have been in very evil case had the bear

desired to go to the assistance of the young and found the way barred by our bodies. Certainly there would be nothing left for her at that place, at least, where we found ourselves, than to kill us and "eat her way through" in the literal sense of the words—for she could not with the best will in the world have got over us or under us. When we were consulting under our breath what we should do, the cry suddenly ceased, and we again went noiselessly forward with fresh courage in our breast. From all we had so far seen of the bear, she must be very cowardly; and that was a consolation. The hole, however, seemed to have no end and we crept and shoved ourselves further and further through the rough rock to the detriment of elbows and ribs.

This cavity had one peculiarity which I never found in any other. I mean the flat stones of about one to two inches in thickness, running along the inside like shelves, and giving out a sound like steel if struck lightly with the finger. One place, perhaps forty or fifty feet long was of most extraordinary construction. Flat stones such as I have spoken of ran along on both sides, and projected within six inches of each other, so that you could creep along almost in a sitting posture, shoving the neck between the two shelves with the head in the space above. But in the process, for this short space at least, the head and the body were in separate compartments, which was, to say the least, a highly uncomfortable condition, especially if the bear should attempt to make an attack under such circumstances.

When at length we had made our way through this pass, we came to a spring which ran for a short distance along the passage, and then disappeared to the right—and surely it was in this place for the accommodation of Mrs. Bear alone. The spring had washed out a channel perhaps eighteen inches deep and eight to nine inches wide; and with one foot in this channel we went forward much more easily.

After I had again worked my way through a place, more than uncomfortable, and was drawing as deep a breath as the narrow passage allowed, suddenly I heard the deep growl of the beast and, as it seemed, quite close to me.

Although I had for several hours and at every step been watching for and expecting this very growl, the sudden

sound close in front of my nose startled me, so that I nearly let the torch fall. But I soon recovered my equanimity; and holding the torch as high as possible (to the great discomfort and dismay of some innocent bats) I got a clear view of the bear not ten paces from me, sitting upright, snapping her fangs, scratching with her sharp claws the ground in front of her and seeming to be in the very worst humor in the world.

Young Conwell who was close behind me now laid his hand on my foot and whispered to me that he saw the bear. As I had already seen her, I beckoned him to keep quiet, and creeping forward a few paces further, I came to a place from which I believed I could shoot.

I let my right foot down into the channel worn by the spring, raised my self up on the left knee as well as I could, and raised the rifle.

My rear rank man, who had watched most anxiously all my movements, warned me for God's sake to aim carefully, for if I made a bad shot we were both "goners." Although I was nearer the danger than he, I would not have changed places with him for as he could not see the least thing of what was going on, he of course always feared the worst--and I would rather under such circumstances be exposed to a danger approaching most closely than be in a constant state of suspense and uncertainty.

The bear did not at all enjoy my approach; she snapped around and her eyes glowed like fire; with her short ears laid back, she moved her whole body from side to side in disquiet. As she was sitting somewhat boxed I had no other choice than to shoot at the head, having the hope that if I missed the head, the bullet would in any case pierce the breast. While I was lying there aiming for a moment (why should I deny it?) the thought passed through my mind how helpless I would be, hemmed in as I was, in case the shot missed--and the recollection of the dear ones at home came over me with the speed of thought. This was only for a moment, and in the excitement of the present, I forgot past and future. My aim was long, as the bear did not stay still a second; but still the finger pressed the trigger too quickly. In an instant thick smoke filled the cavity, and a piteous groaning showed that the bear was wounded. We did not take time to investigate more closely but crawled

back as quickly as the narrow space permitted, so as to get to a higher place where we could reload the rifle and return to the field of battle.

We had not crawled thus crab-fashion, a hundred paces, and I had just found a place such as was required, when I heard the wounded animal snuffing and snorting and gnashing her teeth so that the sound came echoing through the hole.

My first thought was "Good bye, daylight." I had not much time for deliberation and called quickly to young Conwell to hurry if he thought anything of his life and mine, for the old girl was coming. It was quite unnecessary to urge him further—I never saw a crab crawl backwards more quickly than we now did in our endeavor to get out of that place. But no matter how we hurried, and no matter how near the danger came, our retreat went but slowly, and nearer and nearer came the snorting.

I had already been forced to leave behind the empty rifle as it hindered my progress, and I was continually looking in front where I always expected to see the bear, when suddenly I observed her glowing eyes only a few paces away. At that very instant, I struck my left elbow against a projecting point of rock—the torch fell from my hand and pitch-dark night immediately ensued. Young Conwell had another lighted torch but my body filled the space so completely that no ray of light could make its way past me.

Almost involuntarily, and as with a kind of instinct, I threw the yet smouldering fragments of the torch at the bear. This must have disconcerted her for she stopped suddenly. This did not continue long; all too soon I heard her again come on.

All of a sudden, young Conwell stopped short; and swore he would be damned if that was not the end of the passage for he could not get any further. At the same time, his right hand which held the torch slipped into the spring, and Egyptian darkness was the immediate result.

I had no time to answer him, for the bear who was slowly following our retreat as though she knew we were doing our best to get out of her way, was now close in front of me; and I am convinced that I could have laid my hand on her if I had stretched out my arm. I could feel distinctly the beast's hot breath in my face; and with my broad hunting knife closely clasped in my right hand.

I waited expecting with every pulsebeat the attack of the wounded animal. The danger was too near not to lose its terror; and at the moment I thought of nothing else than to sell my life as dearly as possible. I had no hope ever to get out of this pass.

Young Conwell was not idle during this time but he had quickly felt for flint and steel, knowing well that we could not do without light. The stroke of steel against flint was now the only sound which broke the dead stillness for at the first blow the bear had stopped sniffing, apparently to listen to the strange sound.

After a painfully anxious interval, Jim (young Conwell) called out at length, "I have got a light, give me the powder horn and a bit of rag." I cut the cord of the first, tore off a piece from the hunting shirt and handed both back; in a few minutes the pine had caught.

Hope sprang anew in our breasts—or rather in mine, for Jim had feared little or no danger. In the first place he did not know how near the bear was, and then he had been so busy in striking a light that he (as he afterwards assured me) had thought of nothing else than to get a light. Moreover he had succeeded in turning round, and the cry that he had found the right opening sounded to me like the song of an angel.

He had now the advantage that he could crawl forward, while I had to keep face to the bear; but he reached me a few splinters of burning pine and we moved slowly to the entrance of the cave.

When I held the torch in front, the bear growled and went a few steps backward gnashing her teeth; but she followed us again when she saw we were retreating. "Necessity is the mother of invention," I laid a few pieces of burning pine on the floor and saw with inexpressible pleasure that she stopped at them and did not venture to pass. With, if possible, even greater haste we scrambled to the place where we had left the elder Conwell by the cubs. Jim reached the place before me and I heard him yell to his father, to crawl away back as the bear was coming.

Not another syllable was uttered—in fact the sniffing and snorting was coming nearer again. Apparently the flame had gone out on the moist floor and she had found nothing else to hinder her from following us.

I now, following the two Conwells, crept over the place where she had been

her lair. And there I discovered why the cubs had so suddenly ceased their outcry when we stopped in the hole, undecided what to do. The old man had smashed their skulls against the rock wall, apparently in that way saving our lives; a single cry of the cubs when our torches were out would certainly have maddened the wounded beast.

I stopped about a hundred yards from the lair to listen; but I did not hear the slightest sound. I called to the others to wait for me, and when we had got to a fairly roomy spot, where an old bear had had his bed, we held a short council of war, crouched down together in that narrow place.

Old Conwell thought that the bear had returned to her young and had lain down by the slaughtered animals; and that one of us should crawl to our camp in front of the cavern and get another rifle, for it was quite impossible to get past the beast angered and wounded as she was, to get my rifle again. I made up my mind, however, that before I would crawl the long and uncomfortable way back to our camp, I would creep once more to the bear's lair and see if she was not dead. I could not think that my bullet had had such slight effect. When I got there, however, I did not see the faintest trace of the wounded creature.

My cry brought the others; we examined the place carefully, moving a little forward and following the marks of the blood which lay thick and dark red upon the floor. We found that instead of returning to the old bed, she had followed the opening to the left.

My gun lay over three hundred paces away in the right passage and it was necessary for me to crawl there for it. It was covered with mud and blood; I returned as quickly as I could and cleaned and loaded it. There was no use thinking of resting, we were all so excited—we started forward anew to finish the fight we had begun.

The left-hand opening was just as hard to walk through—or rather to crawl through—as the right; but fortunately the bear had not retreated so far, and we soon reached the spot where she was at bay and was awaiting us, raging and biting around her.

When almost on her—I could not have been more than eight or nine feet away—I stopped, raised myself as much as I could in the passage, laid the rifle on my left wrist (I was holding the torch in

that hand) and fired at the instant that she held her head still, though, but for a second. The heavy crash of the rifle echoed through the cavern and everything was hidden in thick smoke.

I certainly heard the bear moving and groaning; but I held my ground because I knew that this time my ball had reached the right spot; and when the smoke had lightened, there she lay dead not three yards in front of me. Young Conwell and I were ourselves nearly dead; and at that time to drag the beast out would be simply an impossibility. Crawling round in the heavy air of the cavern and in the pine smoke as well as the terribly exciting situation of constant danger for so many hours had been too much even for our hardy constitutions and had so exhausted us that we determined to get to the fresh air as quickly as we could and to take a complete rest there.

It took us about half an hour to reach the exit. I shall never forget the impression the cold fresh night air made upon me as I inhaled in long eager draughts the balsamy odor of the open woods and looked at the blue starry sky once more.

Our schoolmaster and young Smith were fast asleep but, wakened by the barking of the dogs, they both sprang up—they were nearly killed with fright for, as they swore, they never in their lives had seen such figures as we three presented, standing there before them in the ruddy glare of our pine-torches, covered all over with mud and blackened beyond recognition by the pine smoke.

By the stars it appeared to be about two o'clock in the morning, so long had we been knocking around in the hole; and though we were hungry as lions, we were too exhausted to enjoy food.

The two woke us at daybreak. We took a fairly good breakfast, and leaving this time the old man behind as he had exerted himself beyond what was warranted by his years, the four others of us went into the hole with a rope to bring our booty out to the daylight. We fastened the rope round the bear's neck and I forced myself in behind her and shoved while two of the others pulled and Jim held the torch. In this way we moved inch by inch, and it was mid-day when we threw the bear with a hurra, in which all joined, down the slope to our camp fire where my dog Bears-grease at once took possession of

her and laid himself growling down beside her.

(Gerstæcker then describes the homecoming and his return to the hunt.)

I had discovered another small opening and found fresh marks; the bear must, however, have gone to drink or exchanged this place for a better for I could see nothing of him. I went in front of the entrance to listen for a sound when I distinctly heard our dog and I found after a few moments' careful listening that they were coming straight for me—louder and more distinct sounded the crashing of the old branches, and suddenly I saw a bear break out and dart forward.

Rushing down a little slope about ten feet high, he came straight towards me fast as his legs would carry him. I stood quite still to see how near he would come. When he was about fifty paces away he got wind of me and stopped short in his rapid course, sniffed in the air for a moment and then turned and shot away from me like an arrow. This moment sufficed for me to send a bullet after him; but I was too excited and heated and my lead struck him only in the ham and broke his hip-bone. In the meantime the dogs had been halted by the slope down which Bruin had bolted; and thereby he had won quite a lead, but the loss of one hind leg hindered him much in his flight and soon I heard him striking back the dogs which had overhauled him.

A young man by the name of Erskwine who was hunting not far away, attracted by the sound of my rifle and the baying of the hounds, came up at the right time to give him the fatal shot and soon he was no more.

Erskwine told us that he had himself found a hole in which he was satisfied a bear was lying; and said if one of us would go with him he would make the attempt to get the bear. He added that he was just on his way to the nearest pine-wood to prepare a torch as he had brought none with him.

I at once agreed and took one of the wax-candles I had brought from home. We explained fully and accurately to the others how they could find us, and then set out upon our way and reached the place which was not far away about sundown. We made a good fire in front of the opening and crept in, Erskwine in front. The opening was very contracted; but the hole widened out considerably so that we could go along

side by side nearly upright. When we had made our way in a piece we heard the bear whimpering softly; and Erskwine who was an old bear-hunter who had knocked round in the mountains for a long time said that he was sound asleep.

Arrived at a curve in the passage, we suddenly caught sight of him at our feet; and in fact he was holding his head be-

tween his feet giving vent to a low wailing sound.

Erskwine who carried the rifle made no long preface but put the muzzle to the back of Bruin's head and fired.

The death struggle and convulsions were short and soon he lay stretched out dead.



## Hunting Wild Turkeys

**H**UNTING turkeys with hounds is certainly one of the most interesting and at the same time agreeable methods of hunting in the world. As soon as the dogs have discovered a turkey walk, they chase after the turkeys with frantic barking. Although the turkey can run very fast the dogs can easily catch him. To avoid this, he flies with his heavy flight to the nearest tree and generally to the top of it and looks from this point of vantage with curiosity down on the dogs yelping below and springing up on the tree.

Now must the hunter begin with his utmost skill to creep up on the bird which keeps looking around and which when he discovers a human being, rapidly seeks safety again in flight. The best way to get the advantage of him is with as much noise as possible to go round the the single turkey or the flock in a circle

and break through the bushes with barking and yells. The foolish creature then listens to the strange sounds and when he has come near enough the hunter must spring quickly behind a tree where with a good eye and a steady hand he may bring down with a bullet the bird from trees often one hundred and thirty or one hundred and forty feet high; shot will not carry that far. It is not necessary that the turkey should be fatally wounded; it is sufficient if he is hit in the wing—for his own weight will without fail kill him in the fall.

It is a great satisfaction to see a turkey start in his secure-seeming roosting place, when he feels the bullet turn round and then with a heavy fall strike the earth.

The female weighs nine to twelve and sometimes fourteen pounds; the male sixteen to twenty and often twenty-two pounds.



## Wild Turkey Shooting in the Spring

**W**ITH the Spring, returns the pairing season of these birds, and at daybreak their gobbling sounds far out on the clear morning air. Answered from hill to hill, it is a glad sound for the hunter. Shy and wild as the gobbler is, and impossible or at least exceedingly difficult as I have always found it to creep up to him, it is very easy at this season to allure him if one can imitate well the call of the hen. To do this with advantage the American hunters proceed in the manner I shall describe and many a splendid and stately turkey-cock have I shot by this method.

Early in the morning before even the first pale shimmer of the dawn shows it-

self in the far east, the hunter proceeds to the place where he knows or suspects the turkeys to be. Having got sufficiently near the spot, he stops and remains quite still until the earliest dawn. Then he imitates the sound of the night owl which in that region cries in a very loud and mournful voice—turkeys cannot abide that sound and those who are to be found in the vicinity begin to gobble with all their might. If the ground permits—that is if there are no dry leaves lying or if the bushes are not too thick-set to allow him to crawl up without noise—the hunter creeps up within gunshot of the tree and brings down the turkey before it is yet day. If he is afraid however that he cannot

get within gunshot without being observed, or if the day has advanced too far before he has reached the neighborhood of the pairing turkeys, then the hunter cowers down noiselessly under an overturned tree trunk, lays his rifle in position ready for shooting and begins to lure. The lure consists of the second thin wingbone of the female turkey which cut off at either end is freed from marrow and held with one end between the lips, the other between the two hollow hands—the air drawn through the bone imitates most deceivingly the voice of the hen turkey.

The gobbler hearing the alluring voice of the hen, gobbles as if he were mad, flies down from the roost upon which he has spent the night and comes along rustling his wings upon the ground, his comb and wattles swollen red and blue, his tail spread out like a peacock, with stately strides marching often to within a few feet of the hunter, provided

that the hunter lies wholly concealed and does not move a limb and indeed does not even bat an eye.

Before shooting at the oncoming turkey with a bullet—for no one carries a shot gun in these parts—it is a good plan to startle him as in the feathers all spread out, the body lies so hidden that often the bullet misses even at a few paces. The best way to startle the bird is by a soft short whistle. At the whistle the turkey quickly pulls himself up and rises with suspicious eye, while he gives voice to a warning, startled, "kitt." This is the time for the hunter to pull the trigger, for he should have his gun already cocked. If he should lose this moment, the opportunity will never recur, the turkey is lost for good and disappears into the thicket in the next moment.

The shot rings out: the turkey leaps high in the air and falls to earth, dead.



### Bee Hunters in American Forests

ST. had a few days before talked about chopping down a tree in which he had discovered a hive of wild bees, but something had always happened to prevent it. On the first of June 1838 we set out on the job talked about for some time, getting away by daybreak. Our company consisted of four persons, St., his brother-in-law McD., Uhl and myself. The two Americans brought axes with them; Uhl and I each a bucket to receive the honey which we hoped to find. We went to a little prairie about three miles away and soon came across the tree which St. had found and marked.

It is the custom in the American woods for a hunter who finds a tree with wild bees, and who has not the time or the inclination just then to cut it down, to carve his name on the tree, or if he cannot write, which was St's case, to cut his mark. If another person chance to find a tree marked in this way, he goes his way and leaves the tree to its first discoverer.

St's tree was an old dead red-oak and stood at the edge of the little prairie. The two axes wielded by strong and skilled arms soon made the tree already infirm, totter and fall with a crash. By St's direction, I had in the meantime

lighted a fire, covered it with rotten wood and placed it on a big piece of bark so that it gave off a thick black smoke. As soon as the tree fell, I held this piece of bark, with its steaming rotten wood straight under the opening through which the bees flew in and out. Stupified by the smoke the bees flew high in the air and not a single one stung me, although there were many flying around and many alighted upon my clothes. Our labour was not without its reward for we found a fairly large limb filled with honey, of which we ate all we could and took the rest home.

On another occasion as the weather about one o'clock in the afternoon became very sultry and unpleasant, we determined to go into the woods and see if we could find a swarm of wild bees which we had looked for in vain six months before.

We took our lure along and went to a place about half a mile away. To find bees in the fall and to set his lure to work, the bee-hunter begins operations by selecting a small open place near where he suspects bees; and if such a place is not to hand he quickly hews one out with his knife and tomahawk; in the middle of this place he sets a stake in the ground, sticks a bundle of leaves on it

and then sprinkles some diluted honey over all.

It is not long before the bees find out the sweet lure, and after they have laden themselves with it, they rise in the air first in small and then in wider circles and then dart suddenly in a straight line for their hive to deposit in the common warehouse what they have collected.

The bee-hunter must watch carefully the direction in which the laden bees proceed—and in that of course a good eye is all-essential. Then he carries his lure two hundred or three hundred paces in the direction observed. The bees flying in the neighborhood soon find this and attack it in its turn. If they keep up the same direction as before, it indicates that the tree is still further away; and the honey besprinkled leaves are carried in that direction until the bees begin to fly in the opposite direction. Now the hunter knows that he has passed the tree and that the hive must be found between the former station and the present. It is then a matter of no great difficulty to discover it. When he is close to the tree and the bees are working, their uncertain rise and flight this way and that, show beyond any doubt the neighborhood of the hive.

We carried our hive forward only once when the bees began to fly in the opposite direction and we now knew that we must find the tree hardly one hundred yards away—accordingly we did

not watch the bees lighting any further but watched those flying around. Darkness coming on, however, prevented us finding the warehouse that evening.

About ten o'clock next day when it began to get a little warm we took ourselves again to our post and after hardly a quarter of an hour's search we found the hole through which the little workers went in and out. It was in an almost entirely rotten oak of no great size, of a species which prefers moist soil, but sometimes grows in the mountains, and bears small sweetish acorns. Its wood is very durable and does not easily rot in the ground.

I rode quickly back to the house brought a pail, an axe, a knife and a spoon—and when I got back to the tree, it fell in quick order under our blows. Smoke was produced, the bees stupified, quickly an opening was hewed in the tree through which we could easily and conveniently extract the honey—and there lay suddenly before us the most beautiful sight a bee-hunter can wish for, a huge mass of well filled honey comb.

We filled the pail with the best, and ate as much as our stomachs could hold—then we set fire to the tree we had plundered so that these bees should not in a future hunt lead us astray—and then we turned homeward.



### Hunting Experiences further South

**G**ERSTECKER got down into Arkansas in January 1838 and tells his story thus:

"The next night I slept at the house of a Kentuckian who had settled here; more than a dozen hounds ran about the house and he was very anxious for me to take one of them, which according to his account was particularly good for turkey hunting—I believe he wanted to get rid of him.

"I saw as I was sauntering along the road, a deer standing close by the way quietly grazing. As I had no great confidence in the training of my hound, I tied my white linen handkerchief around his neck, knotted the string of my powder horn to it and fastened this to a young oak tree. I got within eighty-five paces of the unsuspecting

and quietly feeding deer but having the wind in my back, the deer soon smelt me approaching and in the twinkling of an eye leaped over a fallen tree into the thick wood. My buckshot whistled after him of course, but in the hurry and excitement I must have miscalculated the distance, for at 150 paces from me he only limped a little in the hind legs. My dog, now however, did not think it necessary to play the simple spectator any longer: He had already bitten the string through and with my handkerchief round his neck to which a piece of the powder horn string still hung, off he set after the fleeing game. "And horse and rider saw I nevermore!" Neither dog nor handkerchief nor deer ever again came within the range of my vision."

Some time afterwards he fell in with a tribe of Indians whom he joined in a hunt. He says:—

"Sixteen in all of us went together all on foot. Some of the Indians had firearms, others only bows and arrows with which they made extraordinarily long and sure shots. I went with a young Indian who had a bow and arrow and we strode along in silence neither being able to make himself understood by the other. About noon we caught sight of a herd of deer. My companion went around the herd to the lee and shot two with his deadly arrows—the leader of the herd, a fat buck which came within ten paces of where I was standing, I shot. To get our game to camp it was necessary to get horses and accordingly we went to the camp a few miles away. Taking horses, at last we came to my deer but there was sitting on him a wild cat making a meal of his flesh. The Indian made a leap towards the cat, and that beast catching sight of the Indian too late, jumped into a tree. An arrow from a sure bow brought her quickly to earth. She was grizzly in color and bigger than our tame cats. These creatures will when angry attack even man."

Travelling south and west he came to a place where some twenty buffaloes had slept the night before.

"The beds were bare of snow, the twigs of the bushes chewed and the tracks looked as fresh as though they had just been made in the white covering of the earth.

"That was all I wanted—buffaloes—and what kind of tracks did I find? An old bull who must be a particularly large and strong rascal. Of course I hoped to overtake the herd in a short time and I followed the trail noiselessly."

He failed, however, to overtake the buffaloes. But he was no worse off than old Slowtrap who told him this story:

"I had once a shot-gun and not far from my house was a little lake which great quantities of wild ducks frequented. One morning I took old "Kicker," (for it did kick like the devil) and went out to shoot a duck or two. I had not been long on the shore when I saw on the other side of a thick bush a whole flock of ducks swimming. A tree trunk which had fallen in the lake seemed to me a splendid bridge to get close to the unconscious ducks. At length when I had reached the last point of the broken

tree and was perhaps sixty paces from the care-free and quacking birds I lifted my old heavy musket and took aim. I knew very well how old Kill-devil kicked, so I leaned as far forward as possible under the firm conviction that the gun would throw me back on the old tree trunk. Three of the ducks were in a line and I thought this just the right moment so I let off the gun at the same time leaning even farther forward if that were possible. Old Satan missed fire, the push backward expected and counted on, did not come off and down I went head foremost into the lake—but I certainly saw nothing for I had eyes, ears, gob and nose full of water. With great exertion, I got my carcass out again on to the bank, but gun or ducks I never set eyes on after."

This was not the most interesting of Slowtrap's stories—here is another:—

"It was in the Fall in Kentucky at a time when a young hunter could shoot his five or six deer before breakfast that once before daybreak I went out to hunt. I shot two fine bucks and had followed a third about half a mile when he smelt me and made off. Tired with the exertions I had made I threw myself down under a tree to rest a bit so as to be able to go on with the hunt, especially as the night before I had hardly got a wink of sleep because a panther kept howling around, and often came so near the fire that for a moment I could see his outline, but he never kept still long enough for me to send a bullet after him with any certainty of hitting him. Involuntarily my eyes closed; and I cannot say how long I lay there when, half asleep, I heard a rustling in the dry leaves and I felt the leaves thrown over me so fast that in a few minutes I was wholly covered with them. First surprise and then fear of some danger which I did not rightly comprehend held me motionless on the ground awaiting the outcome. Before I could come to a conclusion what to do I heard something move silently away from where I was lying, and carefully raising my head, I could recognize the shape of a panther as it disappeared in the woods.

"My first impulse was to jump up and put fresh powder in the pan of my musket, but as I could no longer see the animal but knew she was certain to come back, I made up my mind to meet cunning by cunning. The creature had looked upon me as a bit of food and had

covered me up all snug for the next meal. I would spoil her little game. I took a piece of a limb which lay near, put it in my place and covered it up carefully with dry leaves. Then I tied my musket on my back and climbed up a little oak tree, patiently to await the conclusion of the adventure. My gun was all ready and with heart beating loudly I waited the return of the panther, who might appear at any minute.

"I sat there perhaps half an hour with eyes fixed upon the place where she had disappeared—when the twigs moved and the female panther, for it turned out to be a female, came back accompanied by two young. I had no doubt at all that it was the old panther which had cached me for her supper.

"She reckoned without her host, however, and I, waiting to see her plan, remained motionless in the tree, my gun all ready pointed.

"She crept up noiselessly till about fifteen paces from where she had left me all nicely covered up, crouched down with her green eyes fastened on my innocent log, then suddenly threw herself upon it with a mighty spring and struck her sharp fangs deep in the decaying wood.

"I did not leave her long in doubt. Just as she saw she had been fooled and was standing there in the same spot in perplexity, my bullet crashed into her brain and without a sound she fell dead over her supposed prey. I then killed the whelps with no great trouble."

There was an old man Mitchell, too, who once had a dangerous adventure in the Cash swamps. It was the pairing time for turkeys and he had gone out early one morning to shoot a turkey-cock. He heard an old one gobbling for dear life not far away, so he lay down behind a fallen tree and with his turkey call of bone he imitated the hen so as to induce the cock to come nearer. A wild cat must either have been in a neighbouring tree or perhaps led by the call it had slunk up near. The hunter had not been calling long when the brute sprang from behind upon him all unconscious of danger, and tried with all its might to tear his jugulars asunder with its teeth. He was frightened nearly to death and was unable to drag the wildecat off so he had to kill it, when still on his back, with his scalping knife. He had to spend several weeks in bed before he completely recovered from

the deep and dangerous wounds made by its claws.

Gerstaecker one day saw the trail of a bear and determined to follow it. The hounds soon got restless and set off down the slope of the terraced ground, and shortly after the hunters heard them barking below. Just as quick as they could go, they followed the hounds and found them where a hole ran into the mountain under a huge mass of rock.

"The bear was in the hole, for sure, for the bitten off twigs showed that clearly enough, even if the dung lying around in several places had not betrayed him. The hounds made an awful racket and in order to see exactly where the bear was, I laid aside my gun and bullet pouch and with knife in hand was about to look around inside a little when Bruin smelt a rat. He must have been lying close to the opening, the hole was only about eight feet deep and it was a little crook which hid him from view. The barking of the dogs must have shaken him out of his equanimity. As I came near to him, the wind being in my back, he smelt me and growling and roaring he sprang up and out and nearly ran over me. The side spring I made would have done credit to a skirmisher. My old friend who had seen many such a hunt had remained quietly standing by the entrance of the bear's hiding place and watched what I was doing. He held his gun all ready and before I and the hounds could recover ourselves from our confusion, the sharp crack of his weapon rang out.

"The bear, however, seemed to have determined at all hazards not to let himself be taken for he soon disappeared in the clefts of the rocks. But there went with him our two hounds who came to themselves with the sound of the rifle shot. The old man laughed heartily as he saw me standing dazed before the empty hole, knife in hand, and only regretted that he had not been able to devote all his attention to my leap as he was kept too busy by the fleeing bear.

"We followed the dogs and upon the rocks over which we had seen the bear spring, we found on close examination, plain evidence that he was seriously wounded. Weakened by loss of blood he was unable to out-run the dogs. They were both young and inexperienced so that he had not much trouble to keep them off, but they kept him stationary all the same.

"We got to the scene of the conflict

just as the bear had struck down the hounds and was starting to climb up a steep bluff. I aimed at his head and smashed his right front paw. Down he came heels over head and the hounds again engaged him. My old companion was now also at hand and taking steady aim he sent a bullet through the heart of poor Bruin still wearily defending himself. It was a two year old bear fairly fat and promised delicate steak."

The American Panther, Gerstaecker thus describes:—

"It is almost uniformly distributed over the whole of the huge North American continent—it is not substantially larger than a large mastiff, measuring from snout to the tip of the tail, six to seven feet. It has much the same color as the game it pursues. In summer it has a reddish appearance but in winter it takes on a bluer shade. Its smooth skin shows small scarcely noticeable darkish rings, though these indeed are wanting in some specimens. It is dangerous to man only when it is roused or wounded; and the instances when he has sprung upon a camping hunter are very rare (if they have ever happened at all) and only the extremity of hunger could drive him to it. The backwoods men of America have a remarkable saying that the panther likes to attack enceinte women. How far that is true I know not but he is certainly dangerous to young cattle and horses and often does great harm to them."

A story is told him of a buffalo hunt which we omit, simply giving the end of the adventure. After shooting some buffaloes and regaling themselves with half cooked marrow the hunters lay down to sleep.

"Turner wrapped himself in a fresh and heavy buffalo skin, hairy side in and was soon sound asleep. During the night it became bitterly cold and several times we had to get up and throw fresh wood on the fire to protect ourselves from the truly cutting cold. Turner, however, lay still and never stirred in his warm buffalo skin.

"Toward morning the wind turned round to the northwest and thick snow clouds arose. We made up our minds to break camp as soon as possible, and make for home before the snow-storm caught us, so we prepared breakfast and saddled our horses which had toward morning crept up as close as possible to the fire. We called Turner by name several times to get up—a light move-

ment of the whole buffalo skin was the only answer we got for a good while. At last a smothered voice within the skin called for help. We sprang up in fright for we thought something had happened to him, but we could not restrain our shouts of laughter when we found that the poor devil was frozen in. The flesh side which was out was frozen stiff and hard and did not allow the slightest movement to the captive within. He had actually moulded the wet hide to his body and the frost had turned it into stone except at the head where his warm breath had kept it pliable.

"Shrieking with laughter we rolled him round and round before the fire until the hide was thawed out and we at last could take him out of his shell. The heat and rolling made him quite giddy but a hot marrow-bone soon brought him to himself."

Afterward he went down into Louisiana and took note of the alligators.

"The heat was oppressive even in May, particularly during midday hours and the sun was already beginning to burn. All the whites went indoors to enjoy their siesta and I took my gun and harpoon and went back from the stream a bit into the swamp to shoot alligators which frequented the warm still water in incredible numbers.

"Terrible stories are told of these alligators, that they lie in wait in the neighborhood of man with voracious hunger and lust for blood, and with mad rage fall upon anyone coming near. I have, however, always found them quiet, harmless creatures and liked to hunt them.

"In the huge swamps of Louisiana and indeed throughout the whole southern part of the United States in the water of the lagoons and rivers these alligators live in great numbers. They belong to the lizard family and have the shape and make of the lizard, but they often attain a length of twelve to sixteen feet, especially in the southern parts of Louisiana and Florida. The huge head which extends almost the fourth part of the animal's length, opens like a shark's—the upper jaw instead of the lower being moveable—and a fine set of teeth shows up in front of a rose red throat. Around the body is a hard, armour-like hide beset with small angular pieces; under the belly these become hard, white scales. The hostrils lie close together and when the alligator on a still sunny day rests, as it were, on the

top of the water, only the eyes with a small part of the head and neck and, some sixteen to twenty-two inches in front of these, the nostrils, show above the water. The eyes are themselves very small and look cunning and catlike. The legs are short and not much good for walking but they are so much the better for swimming. A favorite occupation of his is to lie in the hot sunshine upon the sandy bank of a lake or river and with wide open jaws watch the insects flying around which are attracted by a musky odour given out by some glands which the animal has under the throat. They seat themselves upon his broad tongue and when he thinks he has enough he snaps his jaws and swallows them with the greatest satisfaction.

"In the pairing time, the old alligators fight many bloody battles with jaw and tail. The long tail, hard as armour plate, is its most dangerous weapon, but it uses the tail less for killing than for catching its prey—with it, it strikes any victim which it discovers and throws it with the tail, forward to the jaws where it is received with a friendly snap.

"The alligator is like Mary, Queen of Scots, in one respect; it is better than its reputation. The frightful stories which are told about its lust for blood and ungovernable hatred for man are for the most part much exaggerated.

"A white man has very little to fear from the alligator, unless it is aroused and excited or wounded and then very seldom—but the negroes, the alligator certainly does lie in wait for. The piquant, peculiar odour of this race—and it is not the most agreeable scent, particularly on a hot summer day—seems to attract them. They love this smell you know, and who can blame them? Don't many men chew asafoetida (Devil's dirt) to purify their breath? Well they love the nigger—at least an arm or a leg of him now and then; and the black sons of Ethiopia take mighty good care not to wade far into the swamp. The alligator also treasures a tender sentiment for young pigs and puppies. One usually gets for himself the whole of the pigs but only part of the pups, for as soon as a dog caught by an alligator lets a yell out of him, all the other alligators in the neighborhood attracted by the cry, swim in from all sides and take their share of the prey.

"The white man they avoid and when one comes along they leave the shore where they are sunning themselves and dive under.

"They do so, damage now and then as we have seen in grabbing young pigs which come near them; they sometimes too, draw under the water a young negro or grab a negress by the leg who has come to the bank to wash—but as they are of but little use to man and have besides an ugly, vicious, dangerous appearance, and what is still worse, an ill name (the old English proverb has it, 'Give a dog a bad name and hang him'), every chance men get they are after them with bullet and harpoon and sometimes large hooks.

"They are not wholly without use to man for put the fat brutes into a kettle and you can get oil from them, useful for machine oil and for the cleaning of cotton. The tail of the small ones—not more than six feet long—has a delicate taste, but the flesh must be detached from the bones as it otherwise will have the peculiar musky flavor of the alligator.

"A planter living not far from us had asked me to have a regular alligator hunt with him as he wanted to get a few gallons of oil and I had the only good harpoon in the neighborhood. One morning he came with his son and two coal-black negro slaves and told me that he had the night before put two light canoes in the little lake behind his house which connected with five or six others by lagoons. He said he was in for a regular hunt; so I shouldered my harpoon, stuck my little scalping knife in my belt, handed the young man my gun and off we went to the lake lying perhaps a mile and a half distant.

"What have you got there, Ben?" I asked one of the niggers, who was carrying under his arm something in a coarse linen bag which gave signs of life.

"You can tell that yourself, massa" said a grinning nigger, opening his tremendous mouth from ear to ear and showing two rows of ivory white teeth—"you can tell yourself" and he squeezed with his left elbow the article in his charge.

"Squeak" went a little pig, which now began to tramp with all four feet.

"Keep still, you little cuss" said the nigger soothingly, "good little fellow, you're all right now."

"He was taking the pig along to coax the alligators near—the pig squealing, the beasts would come nearer and be more easily shot.

"Two printers who set the type for, printed and edited 'The Pointe-Coupée Chronicle' joined us in the hunt and, counting the pig, we made a party of

eight in all. The elder Harbour then divided us into two equal parties. Into each boat went first of all one nigger to paddle, then a printer as overseer—for we did not expect much more assistance from them—then young Harbour with my rifle in one boat and I with the harpoon in the other. I took the pig along and the elder Harbour went in the canoe with his son—the son remarking that the pig and his father were taken along to squeal.

"The sun was burning hot and no shade appeared on the surface of the water except where a solitary cypress overgrown with long grey moss threw its shadow. There was not a breath of air—everything lay in languid stillness and even the alligators which moved along, their heads the color of charred wood, just above the mirror of water, looked as though they were asleep—had not now and then one of the mighty fellows opened his rose-red mouth and after the upper jaw had stood raised for a moment, snapped it down with a heavy snap.

" 'Why even the alligators feel bored here' said Kelly, one of the printers who was with me in the boat.

" 'They'll soon be lively enough, massa,' laughed the nigger, 'just let this little chap under my arm speak.'

"The pig sighed sadly in the sack. We pushed off from the land, keeping all together at first, and tried to creep up on the alligators but they were too shy, and always when we got near and almost within shooting distance, they sank under. I had placed myself in the bow of the canoe and waited in silence for one of the rascals to appear within twelve or fifteen paces, but Harbour senior got impatient and called out to us; 'Give that pig a squeeze, in the devil's name.'

"The printer who was standing up so that he might see better, and to whom it seemed too much trouble to bend down, without moving a muscle of his face, stepped on the pig's belly.

" 'Sque-e-e-e-eak' went the poor beast in agony.

" 'Massa, for God's sake' yelled the frightened nigger, dropping his paddle at the same time, 'you're killing my pig.'

"The experiment had the desired result. Several of the long creatures which up to that time had been swinging away from us turned round and came slowly toward us. The nigger had

to stop paddling and keep quite still, and one of the older brutes about twelve feet long moved close up, not more than thirty paces away. He stopped a moment—he was suspicious of the boat—but the nigger who had knelt down beside his pig, made his pet emit a low whimpering cry, and the alligator attracted by this swam up beside us.

" 'Fire' yelled old Harbour. The rifle cracked and almost at the same moment the fatally wounded monster turned over and showed his white belly. Darting forward and tossing about he fortunately came near enough to my canoe and in an instant the sharp three pronged harpoon was sunk in his flank.

"But the shot had smashed his skull and he could not pitch and dash about much more, so we drew him slowly up to our canoe. It was of course simply impossible to take the huge beast into the small canoe, so we rowed quickly back to the bank and carried him under a tree, still lashing about with his mighty tail.

"The experiment with the pig was now repeated several times and young Harbour shot four more alligators of which we secured only two as I could not get to them quickly enough with the harpoon. I harpooned three besides which ventured too close to us and discovered their danger too late. Two were young and juicy and I forthwith cut off their tails for my own table."

Gerstaecker gives another experience with alligators which might have been very disastrous.

"One midnight I stood harpooning up to the waist in water and although I saw several alligators swimming about, not one came near enough for me to spear him. It occurred to me, I don't know how or why, to coax one near by barking like a dog. I had repeated the experiment hardly three or four times when I saw about sixteen of the brutes coming straight for me. That I thought rather too much of a good thing—deep in the water as I was, I could not be complete master of my movements, so with great and hurried strides I made for the shore some one hundred feet distant. Arrived there I began barking anew, but as I was standing quite in the open they were shy; they would not come close to me but satisfied themselves with swimming around at a respectable distance."